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ABSTRACT

The changing role of women worldwide and its impact on politics, economic development, and social structures is examined. Inadequate education, lack of access to channels of influence, and prejudice generally hamper women in exercising the political rights they are now given by most countries in the world. Priority should be given to those political areas which constitute meaningful exercise of political power, rather than simple, formal political equality, which is already by law extended to all but one-half of one percent of the world's female population. The implication of these findings is that future political development should focus on 1) appointment of women to high-level offices such as cabinet ministries, governorships, and subcabinet posts in not only the "sofe-issue" areas of health, welfare, and social services, but also in the fields of agriculture, planning, commerce, finance, and foreign affairs; 2) consideration of women's qualifications for high political leadership, other than close association with a prominent male politician; 3) a breaking down of the pyramid structure of Civil Service which exists in many countries and is exhibited by an underrepresentation of women in the higher executive and middle-ranking levels; 4) a greater commitment by state and local political units to encourage active participation by women; and 5) more representation by women in all realms of political parties, not just in women's divisions or clubs. It can be concluded that, in spite of prejudice and ignorance, the political status of women is in the process of major and lasting change. (Author/DB)

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# Women in Politics: A Global Review

Kathleen Newland

Worldwatch Paper 3
December 1975

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## Preface

"Women in Politics: A Global Review," by Kathleen Newland, is the third in a series of papers published by Worldwatch Institute in an effort to identify future social trends and problems. The first two papers examined the scarcity of firewood in developing countries and the global politics of food distribution. Future papers will discuss the potential for energy conservation in the United States, current trends in population and family planning, the multifaceted nature of the population problem, and nuclear proliferation.

Research for Worldwatch Paper 3 grew out of Ms. Newland's trip to the International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City in July, 1975. The paper is part of a broader project looking at the changing role of women worldwide and its impact on politics, economic development, and social structures.

Despite the prominence of a handful of women who have gained high political positions in a few countries such as India, Israel, and Great Britain, the political status of women has changed much less than these individual successes suggest. Most countries in the world now grant women the right to vote and to participate equally in other political activities, but women's ability to exercise their political rights is often hampered by inadequate education, lack of access to channels of influence, and prejudice. But there are signs of progress. In local councils, voluntary organizations, and grass-root party structures around the world, women are beginning to participate, to develop political skills, and to win elections.

Lester R. Brown
President, Worldwatch Institute

In history, women who wielded great political power in their own right are so rare that they are accorded almost legendary status. Think of them: Queen Elizabeth I, Joan of Arc, Cleopatra, Catherine the Great. . . . Posterity turns its male political heroes into equestrian statues; the women more often seem to find their places in history as saints or pariahs.

Between the leaders and the led there have always been a host of intermediaries, official and unofficial. Among the latter, women abound. Some of history's most powerful women, barred from conventional means of access to power, found that the road to political influence wound through the boudoir, as wives or mistresses of powerful men. In the official category, however, women have been, until this century, virtually absent. Even the female rulers of the past did not choose other women for their ministers and councillors.

The rise of the modern state brought with it a proliferation of intermediaries and sharers-in-power as parliaments, political parties, and large establishments of civil servants became features of government in many countries. The idea gradually evolved that political participation was not an exclusive privilege but a universal right—for men.

But even as the concept of guaranteed rights spread from Europe and North America, modern representative government excluded women from all levels of government, from the leaders to the voters and
6 minor functionaries, in perhaps a more systematic fashion than more traditional systems. The state of near-exclusion persisted even after the legal barriers to women's participation began to fall, around the turn of this century.

In the 1970s, discrimination against women as political beings continues, but it is being challenged around the world, in every forum from the village council to the United Nations. Almost everywhere though, traditional attitudes remain a barrier to women's involvement in the public sphere. In some countries, such as Sweden, China, and Somalia, the drive to integrate women into the economic, social, and political life of the nation is a priority of the national government. In many others, the struggle for equalization proceeds haltingly, if at all, in the face of governmental indifference or even hostility.

**Nearly Universal Suffrage**

Rates of progress vary widely, but on the whole it can be said that the cause of women's rights is moving forward on an expanding, though somewhat ragged, front. There are only nine countries today in which women are by law excluded from political processes open to men. Except for tiny Liechtenstein, they are orthodox Moslem states in which religious law is strictly (and many say erroneously) interpreted as barring women from public life. The disenfranchised women of these nine countries that deny political rights to women comprise not quite one-half of one percent of the world's female population:

Bahrain
Kuwait
Liechtenstein
Nigeria (six northern states only)
Oman
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
United Arab Emirates
Yemen Arab Republic

**"There are only nine countries today in which women are by law excluded from political processes open to men."**

At the beginning of 1945, only thirty-one countries allowed women to vote. Today, women have that right in more than 125 nations.[1] New Zealand was the first country to enfranchise women on equal terms with men, and by doing so in 1893 ensured that the world did not enter the twentieth century as a total stranger to universal suffrage. Australia followed suit in 1902, and was joined over the course of the next twenty years by more than a dozen Northern European and North American states. Burma, in 1922, was the first Asian country to which women's suffrage was extended, and in 1929 Ecuador became the first in Latin America. Though South Africa continues political discrimination on racial grounds, it ceased to limit the franchise on the basis of sex alone in 1930; less than 40 years after New Zealand took the first step, women's suffrage had a foothold on every continent. Table I charts the progress of suffrage over the next 45 years—progress which has been concentrated in the period since World War II.

Extending the legal right to vote to women does not guarantee that they will exercise it independently, or at all. A 1972 UNICEF study of Arab women noted that many of them do not vote even where they are enfranchised, and that those who do often simply obey the instructions of their male family members in choosing among candidates. The voting behavior of Egyptian women supports this observation: though they gained the right to vote in 1956, only one in ten of the voters in Egypt's 1971 elections was female.[2]

A host of factors determines the voting rate of women. The overall status of women is certainly an important part of the explanation, but others, such as the general level of political culture in a country, may be equally or even more important. In Mexico, for example, women's status is circumscribed by the cult of male dominance and corresponding female passivity known as *machismo*. Yet Mexican women made up nearly half of the registered voters in Mexico from the first year they were enfranchised. (See Appendix A.) That voting rates for women are high throughout Latin America, despite *machismo*, is an indication of the high level of political awareness in the population as a whole. India also combines low social-status for women with a high level of politicization. In 1971, women comprised over 40 percent of its total electors.[3]

**Table I: Women's Suffrage**

| Year | Number of countries where men and women could vote in national elections on equal terms |
|---|---|
| 1900 | 1 |
| 1910 | 3 |
| 1920 | 15 |
| 1930 | 21 |
| 1940 | 30 |
| 1950 | 69 |
| 1960 | 92 |
| 1970 | 127 |
| 1975 | 129 |

Where change is perceptible in women voters' participation rates, the gap between the rates for men and women is narrowing. In most countries women lag behind men in exercising their franchise, but where they have long had the right to vote in stable electoral systems, the gap tends to be small. In the first Swedish election after women's suffrage was introduced, only 47 percent of the women voted, compared to 67 percent of the men. By 1970, the difference was only 1 percent, with 89 percent of the women and 90 percent of the men participating in the election. Collectively, the countries of Western Europe reported a relatively stable voting rate in the mid-1960s of 85 percent for women and 87 percent for men. Voter turn-out in the United States is comparatively low, but the spread between men and women was similar at 2 or 3 percent in 1972. In many countries women voters outnumber men even though a smaller percentage of women vote, simply because the countries' populations are more than half female. In the United States women outnumber men by almost four million.[4]

**Many Votes, Few Offices**

The near-universal recognition of women's political rights and the strength of their voting numbers in many countries are nowhere reflected in their direct role in government. An enormous disparity

exists between women's formal political equality and their meaningful exercise of political power. Though 99.5 percent of the women in the world are legally entitled to participate in the political process, the numbers of women in public office remain in most countries appallingly low. Appendix B gives the proportions of seats held by women in a number of national parliaments. In very few countries do women make up as much as 10 percent of the whole.

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Two groups of states defy this generalization: the Scandinavian countries; and some countries with one-party systems in which there is, actually or effectively, only one candidate for each seat, and in which the ruling party strongly advocates political participation for women. The latter include the Soviet Union, the countries of Eastern Europe, and some developing nations such as Guinea and China.

The caveat that applies to most of the one-party states is that membership in the legislature does not connote real power; in the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern Europe, the legislatures are not decision-making bodies. As one moves closer to the epicenter of power, to the Parties' Central Committees and their Political Bureaus, the proportion of women involved decreases drastically. Neither the Secretariat of the Soviet Communist Party's Politburo, nor the Standing Committee of China's Politburo has any women members. In this, the record of one-party states matches that of most other countries: the roles that women play at the highest levels of government are severely limited.

The trends in the level of female membership in national legislatures are far from uniform. Again, the Scandinavians and Eastern Europeans seem to lead the way with steadily rising numbers of women in parliaments for the past twenty years or so. Other countries—the United States, Germany, Brazil, and India among them—show fluctuations in the share of women among their law-makers that make it difficult to identify any consistent direction of change. But then it is scarcely worthwhile to talk about trends when the range of fluctuation is so low—up and down between two, three, or four percent. A few countries such as Ghana, Pakistan, and Bangladesh acknowledge the improbability of women being elected to the legislature and make the compensatory gesture of reserving a few seats in the assem-

bly for women who are chosen by the elected members.

10 Some analysts take the evidence of minor upswings in the number of women legislators in the mid-1970s as evidence that the combination of greater activism of women all over the world, increasing numbers of highly educated women, and the international consciousness-raising associated with International Women's Year has generated the beginning of a strong movement toward larger numbers of women taking active part in government and politics. As of 1975, this expectation has been neither contradicted nor confirmed by data on women in national legislative bodies.

**Appointive Offices**

In high level appointive offices such as cabinet ministries, the evidence on women's overall situation is even more mixed. In some countries, such as France, Sweden, Guinea, and the Central African Republic, political leaders have made concerted efforts to bring women into their governments. One of the most extraordinary events in the history of women in public office occurred in 1966, when the President of the Dominican Republic appointed women to the governorships of all 26 provinces of that country. (Cynics said this unprecedented move was calculated more to deflect political violence aimed at his deputies than to give women a share in power, since the governors do not have much autonomy.[5])

In general, however, even fewer women are appointed than elected to office. At the beginning of 1975, for example, only three out of eighteen Latin American countries had any women among their Cabinet Ministers.[6] Where they do hold cabinet or sub-cabinet positions, women tend to be concentrated in "soft-issue" areas—health, welfare, social services, and so forth. Françoise Giroud, France's outspoken Secretary of State for Women's Affairs, commented, "It seems to me interesting to note that when, for the first time, four women are members of the French Government, what responsibility is committed to them? Hospitals, children, prisoners and women. Nothing, in short, that might frighten men and bring them to think that women may invade their territory."[7]

**"Where they do hold cabinet or sub-cabinet positions, women tend to be concentrated in 'soft-issue' areas—health, welfare, social services, and so forth."**

A similar extension of traditional sex-role stereotypes in government prevails in many other countries. Egypt's sole female cabinet member is the Minister of Social Affairs; the United States' only woman Secretary heads the Department of Housing and Urban Development; in New Zealand she is Minister for the Environment and for Tourism. The only woman ever to hold cabinet rank in Liberia was Minister of Health and Social Welfare. In 1969, Sweden's two female ministers held the portfolios of Disarmament and Family Affairs. The one woman who has served in the Soviet Council of Ministers was Minister of Culture. Women as Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Agriculture, Planning, Commerce, or Finance are practically unknown.



### The Highest Office

The rare woman with a high position is conspicuous simply because she holds it; she is made even more conspicuous by the tendency to "show-case" her as an example of women's participation in her government, or to use her example to deflect attention from the extreme under-representation in public office of women as a group. Of course, no female office-holder is more conspicuous than a female chief executive. In 1975, women head the national governments of India, Sri Lanka, and Argentina; a fourth is prime minister, effectively the number two position, in the Central African Republic.[8]

Tellingly, each of the three women in the highest position initially derived at least part of her political legitimacy from her associations with a prominent male politician (though it is by no means unusual for male politicians to use family connections as stepping stones into power): Mrs. Peron of Argentina (whose tenure in office seems very uncertain in the closing months of 1975) and Mrs. Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka both succeeded their husbands in office, and Mrs. Gandhi followed her father, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, after one intervening term. None of these four countries is distinguished by a high level of political participation by the average woman; in none do women enjoy particularly high status in other fields. The example of these four women probably illustrates that in some contexts membership in the elite or, more specifically, in an estab-

lished political caste or dynasty, may be a more important qualification for leadership than membership in the male sex.

## 12 Civil Service

Moving from the highest executive levels down through the ranks of civil servants, the representation of women scarcely improves—until one nears the bottom. In some countries discriminatory legislation has effectively barred women from rising in the civil service. Until 1966, Australian women automatically lost their status as permanent officers of the Commonwealth or States' Public Service when they married. They were reclassified as temporary officers, without promotion prospects or fringe benefits. The "Marriage Bar" was dropped in 1966, but the time lag required to overcome lingering prejudice, convince women of the desirability of public employment, and bring a new generation up through the ranks means that there are still virtually no women in the upper echelons of public service.[9] Whether entrenched in official regulations or simply recognized as a fact of life, marriage bars remain in effect in several countries.

Where the literacy rate is high for women as well as men, and women are in the labor force in large numbers, women tend to fill the low paid, low status jobs in government—the clerical and secretarial jobs. Government employment of women in such cases resembles a pyramid with an apex composed of male executives resting on a base of female secretaries, typists, and clerks. Sweden is one of many countries that display this pyramidal structure, with 81 percent of government employees in its lowest civil service grade being women, while only 3 percent of the holders of the highest grade are women. In the United States in 1971, women held a mere 150 of the 10,000 top jobs—jobs with salaries of $26,000 or more—in the executive branch. A more comprehensive profile of the civil service in 1974 was similarly revealing: almost three out of four white-collar workers in the six lower grades were women, one out of four in the six middle grades, and one out of 20 in the six highest. The pyramid narrowed consistently toward the top, with the very highest grade level holding only one or two women per hundred GS-18s. Some departments within the government were even worse. The Defense Department, with 41 percent of its white-collar employees female, had only five women

**"Membership in the elite may be a more important qualification for leadership than membership in the male sex."**

among the 885 employees (career and appointive) in the three highest grades, though women made up 80 percent of the three lowest.[10]

The pyramidal structure does break down in some situations. Where there are big differences in educational attainment between men and women, or where there is a chronic problem of unemployment among the educated, the representation of women in the upper and lower echelons tends to equalize—but only because women are virtually missing from all levels of government employment. India, for instance, has only five women per hundred workers in the elite administrative service of the central government.[11] And men hold even the lower-status, but still eagerly-sought, positions of clerks, typists, secretaries, and receptionists. Women's access to government jobs is not merely an employment issue, for government jobs—even the low-level ones—traditionally are sources of power and status in India and many other poor countries.

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### More Room at the Local Level

Power and status accrue in like manner to the holders of state and local offices—the governors, the mayors, and the members of state legislatures, village councils, revolutionary committees, or county boards. Generalizations about trends in women's participation in local politics are at best speculative. Participation is rising in some countries, stagnating in some, probably even declining in others—but in all the participation of women remains relatively low. (See Table II.)

In the United States the numbers of women in state government moved sharply upward in the mid-1970s. Women held not quite 4 percent of the seats in state legislatures in 1969; they held 8 percent after the 1974 elections. The numbers of women in statewide offices such as treasurer, auditor, or secretary of state, rose by more than a third over the previous election year. The 1974 elections also saw the first woman elected governor of a state in her own right, and the first such woman lieutenant–governor. Two more women were elected to the second-highest state post in the off-year elections of 1975, giving women a total of 3 out of 50 lieutenant-governorships. More than half of the women running for state offices in the United

States in 1974 won. Women in Northern European countries show nearly as much strength in local offices as in their national parliaments, with their numbers rising steadily throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. In India, meanwhile, women's share of seats in the state assemblies hovered between 3 and 5 percent.[12]

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**Table II: Examples of Women's Participation in State and Local Office**

| Country | Offices | Share Held By Women (percent) | Year |
|---|---|---|---|
| China | Revolutionary Committees of the Communes | 30 | (fixed) |
| Finland | Communal Councils | 5 | 1946 |
| | | 15 | 1972 |
| Guinea | Regional Assemblies | 16 | 1968 |
| | | 16 | 1975 |
| India | State Assemblies | 5 | 1957 |
| | | 3 | 1967 |
| | | 4 | 1973 |
| Israel | Municipal council seats | 3 | 1973 |
| Netherlands | Provincial Councils | 7 | 1966 |
| | | 12 | 1974 |
| | Municipal Councils | 5 | 1966 |
| | | 10 | 1974 |
| New Zealand | Territorial Local Authorities | 6 | 1971 |
| Sweden | All Local Councils | 10 | 1958 |
| | | 12 | 1966 |
| | Municipal Councils | 17 | 1974 |
| | County Councils | 10 | 1958 |
| | | 19 | 1974 |
| USSR | Regional, Local, City and Village Soviets | 47 | 1973 |
| | Constituent Republic Supreme Soviets | 35 | 1971 |
| U.S. | State Legislatures | 3 | 1962 |
| | | 8 | 1975 |

One-party states with a commitment to women's participation make good showings with women in local offices, as they do with women in national legislative offices. A third of the deputies in the Supreme Soviets of the USSR's constituent republics are women (though one estimate is that a mere 7 percent of these are truly influential politicians, while the rest are ceremonial one-term appointees), and female participation reaches even higher levels in regional, local, city, and village soviets. According to Dr. Han Su Yin, the Chinese have flatly decreed that 30 percent of the members of the communes' Revolutionary Committees must be women; Chinese women have also reported , secured, without any such governmental fiat, a great deal of influence in urban political organizations. Women occupy 16 percent of the seats in Guinea's Regional Assemblies, and the Tanzanian Government has recently boosted the number of women with regional responsibilities by appointing three new women Area Commissioners. In newly-independent Guinea-Bissau, the law requires that at least two out of five members of each Village Committee (the basic political administrative unit) be women.[13]



Though data on women in local office are too sparse to permit confident generalizations, a few tentative ones are in order. In the majority of countries, women are probably more active in local politics than they are at the national level. Notable exceptions to this rule occur where governments have made a mandate of sexual equality, countervailing traditional attitudes that accord women a subordinate, exclusively domestic role. In places where such conditions prevail, as in Somalia, Guinea, and the People's Republic of China, the farther removed an area is from the capital city, the weaker the central government's authority at the local level, and the more dominated the people are by traditional local leaders, the less likely it is that women will take an active part in local government.

The three foregoing conditions apply primarily to rural areas, and for a number of reasons urban women, especially in developing countries, probably have the best chances for achievement in politics. Yet it is not universally true that women's opportunities for political responsibility are fewer in rural areas. In the United States, small towns and rural areas contribute a disproportionately large share of the women in state legislatures. In another instance, a journalist notes

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that it is precisely in small country towns that women have made the greatest gains in Algeria, a country whose present leaders share with the bulk of the populace a conservative view of women's role. The apparent paradox may be a result of the fact that in the smaller context of the rural town, candidates are personally known to their potential constituents and may be judged for their personal qualities rather than according to sexual or other stereotypes. Then, some cultures have a longstanding tradition of women's access to positions of authority. In Sierra Leone, to cite one example, women today hold 10 out of 81 paramount chieftancies in the southern and eastern provinces of the country. These positions of local authority have served several Sierra Leonean women as bases for movement toward national political prominence.[14]

Variations in the traditional attitudes of the local people toward women's proper spheres of action, and their level of exposure to liberal ideals of sexual equality (or governmental pressure for its enforcement) are two factors that help explain the uneven distribution of women's political participation within countries. In most places from which information is available, however, it seems that the idea of women running for election and holding office is becoming more commonplace. The recent upturn in numbers of women involved in politics at the local level, marked in some places and barely discernible in others, may indeed be the beginning of a strong upward trend.

**Political Influence Outside of Government Office**

The emphasis on voting and office-holding in most writings on women in politics, and in this paper up to this point, is probably misplaced. Many sources of influence and political power other than governmental positions tend to be neglected in analysis, perhaps because they are so much more difficult to document, or even to illustrate, than the genders of the president, deputies, mayors, and councillors in any country. Non-governmental political structures include parties, popular movements centered around issues or interest groups, and alternative government groups such as national liberation movements.

Aside from generating influence in their own spheres, such activities are typically the keys to positions of power within governmental hierarchies. Sometimes the distinction between power exerted from within the government and power exerted upon the government breaks down altogether, as for instance the distinction between party and government leadership in most communist countries, or the distinction between the liberation movement and the state when the former assumes control of the latter. In neither of these situations is the record of women's participation and subsequent involvement in decision-making particularly encouraging.



**The Party and the State**

Women's involvement in the activities of a political party is critical where the party is the real focus of power in the state. The dominant examples of close identification of the party and the state are, of course, the Soviet Union and China. The role of women in the party in both countries must be assessed in order to penetrate beyond formal participation to women's real access to leadership positions. Party membership is a prerequisite for a political career (though in China the People's Liberation Army overlaps with the Party as a political base) and, consequently, for the exertion of influence within the government. Thus the under-representation of women in both the Russian and Chinese Communist parties has grave implications. In the USSR, the percentage of women among party members is now 22.6 percent, up from less than 8 percent at the time of the Revolution and civil war.[15] Even the present figure that suggests a one in four proportion misrepresents political reality, however, because in the upper age brackets women outnumber men by about 40 percent, mostly due to extremely high casualties among the men of this generation during World War II.

The exact proportion of women in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is unknown, but it is probably even lower than that in the Soviet party. The last year for which figures on the composition of party membership are available is 1961, when less than 10 percent of the members were female. Since leadership in the production brig-

ades, communes, and the Revolutionary Committees devolves almost automatically upon members of the Party and/or army, few women achieve such positions. In 1960, about 10 percent of the brigade leaders and 5 percent of the commune leaders were women. The number of women in the CCP and the army is almost certainly greater now than it was in 1960, since the Chinese leadership seems now to be encouraging greater political participation by women. One indication of this drive is the reported requirement that the Revolutionary Committees have nearly one-third female membership —a third instead of a half, it is explained, because at any given time a portion of the women workers will be preoccupied with childbirth and infant care.[16]



Both the Chinese and the Russian Communist parties have periodically recruited women cadres, and periodically retrenched on recruitment. But regardless of current party policy, both parties have conformed to what almost amounts to a universal rule of women's political activity: the closer one gets to the top of any political hierarchy, the fewer women there are to be found. Only one woman has ever served in the Soviet Communist Party's Politburo. The CCP's Politburo had two women members in 1969, with unique qualifications: Chiang Ching was (and is) the wife of Mao Tse-Tung and Yeh Chun was married to the then-powerful Lin Piao. Yeh Chun disappeared from public life along with her husband as the CCP was purged in 1971, leaving only one woman in the Politburo.

All of this is not to deny the enormous strides in political participation made by both Russian and Chinese women since 1917 and 1949 respectively. In each of these countries, the Revolution brought into public life a whole nation of women who had previously been nonexistent as political beings. A genuinely different world of opportunity for women—including political opportunity—than that of the past now exists in each country. Yet it is important to realize that the claims made by both states that their women have attained complete equality in every sphere are subject to serious qualifications. The achievements to date are important but limited; important barriers still remain to be surmounted.

**"As Mao put it, the Chinese man carried on his back the three mountains of feudalism, capitalism, and superstition, but the Chinese woman carried four mountains— the fourth one a man."**

**Women in Liberation Movements**

An examination of some other revolutionary regimes produces a mixed record of achievements in the field of sexual equality in politics. Women have been active participants in the struggles of all modern national liberation movements. Women made the long march in China; they joined in Mozambique's FRELIMO, in Algeria's FLN, in the Russian Revolution from its earliest beginnings, and in the militant nationalist movements of dozens of now-independent nations. Some nationalist leaders acknowledged women's double oppression under the old systems. As Mao put it, the Chinese man before the Revolution carried on his back the three mountains of feudalism, capitalism, and superstition, but the Chinese woman carried four mountains—the fourth one a man. Sékou Touré of Guinea expressed a similar notion when he described Guinean women as having been the "slaves of slaves"—exploited by Guinean men as well as by the French. Egalitarian ideals are part of the standard equipment of national liberation movements, but the standard of enforcement, once such movements come to power, is far from uniform.

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One prominent case of collaboration between women and a nationalist party is that of Guinea. Sékou Touré, the leader of the Guinean Party (PDG), has long had a symbiotic political relationship with his countrywomen; he has portrayed himself as their champion and they in turn are an important part of his power base, and are said to have considerable impact on national decision-making.

Touré began systematically to recruit women to his cause around 1950, recognizing that they were less likely than men to have been co-opted into the Francophile elite by foreign education and posts in the colonial administration. As he himself put it, "In the revolutionary type of action which we have conducted in order to substitute our regime for the colonial regime. . . we were only able to base our efforts on the most disinherited levels of society—those who had everything to gain by a revolution. And so there are, above all, the women. . ."[17] His confidence in them was vindicated in both the election campaign of 1951, when numbers of women apparently followed Toure's suggestion that they deny themselves to their hus-

bands unless the men promised to support the PDG, and again in the General Strike of 1953. Women traders and farmers sustained the strike in Guinea for 73 days, despite its collapse after only ten days in the rest of French West Africa, and seriously weakened the colonial government.[18]

Activism earned Guinean women a voice in the affairs of both the party and the government. As mentioned earlier, the National Assembly of Guinea boasts one of the highest proportions of female members of any such body in the world. Women occupy positions at every level of the Party hierarchy and are present in strength in the trade unions, cooperatives, and market associations. Women have not followed Touré and the PDG policies blindly, however. For instance, when the women's committees of the PDG were abolished in 1964 because they were said to be causing strife in the local party organizations and in the family (which probably translates into challenging male authority), pressure from the women soon forced Touré to re-establish the women's sections. Guinea also has reformed its marriage laws more thoroughly than any other Moslem country—another product of the women's influence. Polygamy and divorce by renunciation were outlawed soon after independence. Thus, the alliance between Guinean women and the nation's male leadership is a pragmatic one for both sides. The women found a powerful advocate of their interests, and Touré and the PDG not only broadened their base of support but also found in women's solidarity a source of cohesion that was capable of transcending diverse tribal and ethnic affiliations.[19]

Guinea is an exceptional case, but it illustrates what can be accomplished where women are well organized in strong independent organizations and have the support of powerful national leaders. A demonstrated capacity for militancy, such as Guinean women have displayed over rising food prices, or over the abolition of the women's political committees, is also quite possibly a prerequisite for measurable progress. Where women are numerically an important part of the electorate but activists are few, lip-service and tokenism may be the only products of women's political participation. Male politicians will not be compelled to fulfill their pledges to women unless women can be counted upon to take them to task for their failures.

Perhaps the most striking case of a national liberation movement that has failed to accord women the political status they earned as participants in the armed struggle is Algeria. Algerian women played an almost legendary role in the FLN, smuggling machine guns in their *burkas* and plastique in their babies' swaddling past French guards, or posing as prostitutes in order to plant bombs in French cafes. Today, however, 13 years after independence, Algerian women are still struggling to throw off the "fourth mountain" of male dominance. Though they have formal political equality, they are grossly under-represented in the National Assembly, in the executive bodies of the Party, and in President Boumedienne's government. Nor have they been "rewarded" for their role in the liberation struggle with progressive social legislation; in fact, divorce by repudiation was reinstated in Algeria in 1970. Polygamy is still permitted, and a woman is legally bound to show deference and obedience to her husband as the explicitly designated head of the family under Algerian family law.[20]



The internal contradictions of the Algerian woman's position—politically emancipated but socially and legally shackled—are manifested in different ways in almost every society, whatever its level of economic and political development. Elements in the colonial and post-colonial situations, however, especially encourage an ambivalent attitude toward women's emancipation. Few colonial administrations ventured officially into the realm of male-female relations and family customs. This restraint left the colonized men kings in their own households, which became treasured refuges from the subordination and humiliation they faced as members of a subject public. Furthermore, to glorify aspects of the indigenous culture which were mocked and denigrated by the colonizers is a way of compensating for the humiliations of colonization. In the case of Algeria, these include precisely those elements of the Arab-Islamic tradition that subjugate and restrict women: polygamy, the veil, easy divorce for men but not for women, and the subordinate position of women within the family.

The trappings of subordination are imbued with an aura of patriotism in many other countries as well. In Kenya and Tanzania, as in Algeria (to name only three of many), women who attempt to shed

the ill-fitting skins of their inferior roles are accused of betraying their heritage, aping the oppressor, and sabotaging the process of mental decolonization. President Boumedienne, for example, insists that progress for women must be based on indigenous "spiritual values" and that women must cooperate to preserve the "Arab-Islamic personality" of the family while pursuing their rights—two goals which are difficult to reconcile in practice.[21]

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As Guinea illustrates the potential progress for women's political participation where women are able to organize themselves and have the support of at least some elements within the male power structure, so Algeria illustrates the difficulties of women gaining ground where both these elements are lacking. Legal equality clearly is not enough to assure that women will have access to positions of power and influence within a government. Where either grass-roots organization or establishment backing is weak, the drive for equal participation is bound to be hindered or distorted.

**Women in Political Parties**

Almost all of the major political parties in the world include women in their ranks. Yet it is common for the women to be isolated in women's divisions, branches, or clubs that are in fact far removed from policy-making and public leadership. Where not segregated officially, they are still concentrated in the lower ranks of the party hierarchy. Typically, women play supporting roles for male politicians; they furnish much of the basic labor for campaign work and fund-raising, but seldom rise to the highest ranks of the party. This pattern produces the often-cited shortage of "qualified women"—individuals who have the experience in responsible positions that qualifies them for selection as candidates, appointment to ministries, or service on high-level committees.

Exceptions to this rule are not difficult to find: Margaret Thatcher heads Britain's Conservative Party; Elizabeth Domitien rose through the ranks of the national party in the Central African Republic to become Prime Minister; and the Congress Party of India has had women in its upper ranks since it was formed. But such women remain newsworthy exceptions. Most women who participate in party

activities are cannon-fodder; they knock on doors, answer telephones, hand out leaflets, and get out the vote—usually in the service of a male candidate.



Though anatomy may be political destiny for the time being, party activity does provide valuable training for the rare women who do achieve political prominence. The party provides a framework for the acquisition and refinement of skills in organization and communication—skills which are necessary for successful candidacy. Equally important, the party is a forum in which women can demonstrate their political capabilities. The growing number of women candidates in many countries suggests that talented women are finding it more and more rewarding to compete with men for party leadership. Yet, like the members of any "out" group, women may have to work harder than men do for the same rewards. Jeane Kirkpatrick, in a thorough study of 46 female state legislators in the U.S., found these women nearly unanimous in the opinion that "a woman seeking to be influential should work a little harder, be a bit more punctual, have a little better attendance record, and know a good deal more if she hopes to overcome the doubts of her colleagues and win their approval."[22]

Separate party organizations for women are at once an opportunity and a frustration. They allow women to develop and exercise the skills that might go unrealized in a system that subordinates women to men from their earliest experiences in politics. If a woman rises to the top of the women's hierarchy, she is indeed likely to be included in the high councils of the party—there, more often than not, to find herself subordinate to less talented, less experienced, and less successful men. Writing of Peru and Chile, Elsa Chaney observes that "the fact that women's political activity is organized apart from the men's is much resented by most of the women's leaders." Chaney attributes this resentment to the prevalence of a situation that is by no means confined to Latin America: "The segregation of women tends to lessen the potential influence women might have on party policy, although the executive committees of even the most conservative parties now have at least one woman member. These women do not, however, have much voice in party policy, and this has been true from the beginning."[23] Party leadership's response to women's participation

is, all too often, tokenism. Where women are segregated into their own political groups, they do not compete with men in the party hierarchy until they reach the top levels—and there the result of the competition is a foregone conclusion.

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**Women as a Power Base**

The men who run political parties have not hesitated to use women, as any politicians would use any numerically important group, for their own ends. Women's political participation has been supported and encouraged, naturally enough, by those parties and politicians who have the most to gain thereby. This may be a mutually beneficial relationship, as the example of Guinean women shows, or it may be a coldly exploitative one.

It is by no means true that liberal parties have been more faithfully devoted to the cause of women's political rights than have conservative parties. The foremost revolutionary party of its time in Latin America, Peru's Alianza Popular Revolucionaria de America (APRA), officially opposed women's suffrage in the 1930s, out of the fear that women who would qualify for the vote would come from the most conservative elements of society. Peruvian women were given the vote in 1955 by a conservative government anxious to ensure its own continuity. After the Mexican Revolution, the government put off giving women the vote for more than 40 years because, according to Chaney, so many women were bitterly hostile to the revolutionary program—particularly to the secularization of the state.[24]

Other Latin American politicians have supported the idea of a strong role for women in politics; their motives need not necessarily be cast in doubt by the political advantages which accrued to them as a result. Juan Peron was an early advocate of women's suffrage in Argentina, calling for the enfranchisement of women even while the military government under which he served restricted the appointment of women to government positions no higher in rank than clerk.

In 1949, two years after Peronist forces passed universal suffrage, the Women's Peronist Party was founded. It became one of the three pillars of the Peronist movement, along with its counterpart men's

**"It is by no means true that liberal parties have been more faithfully devoted to the cause of women's political rights than have conservative parties"**

party and the General Federation of Labor. In the 1951 election, the Peronist ticket's majority among women ranged from 53 to 83 percent in different regions. Peron, in turn, acted positively on some long-standing feminist demands—notably a law permitting divorce, which was repealed as soon as Peron fell from power. Peron's charismatic wife, Eva, welded many women to his cause by giving them, for the first time, a public voice and a political mentor.[25]



President Trujillo of the Dominican Republic sought a different kind of benefit from his patronage of women's suffrage. Following the massacre of several thousand Haitians in his country in 1932, he sought to restore his tarnished international image in the human rights field by becoming a champion of women's political rights. His successor, as mentioned earlier, went Trujillo one better by appointing women to all his provincial governorships.[26]

Some African leaders have, like Touré, encouraged solidarity among women as a counterforce to divisive tribal and regional loyalties. Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau are among those countries that need women to combat such divisions. Tanzania's Nyerere finds women among the strongest supporters of *Ujaama*, cooperative village socialism—perhaps because the women have the most to lose from conventional western-based models of modernization.

Though the notion is purely speculative, it may be that the current wave of activism by China's leadership on behalf of women's political participation is a cornerstone rather than a by-product of the anti-Confucius campaign. Women suffered acutely under the rigidly patriarchal Confucian order. The government, in attacking the ancient system, is challenging sources of affiliation alternative to the State and ways of thinking inimical to its doctrines. Seeking allies in this campaign, how could the State do better than to enlist a full half of the population, easily identifiable and cutting across all classes, regions, and ethnic groups? In exhorting citizens to "smash the thousand-year-old chains, women can hold up half of heaven," the Party and the State are undermining one of the most basic tenets of the old order. Thus, encouraging broader economic and political roles for women is an integral part of the leadership's campaign of consolidation.

The realization that women can be an important source of political support has only recently surfaced in the United States. The Democratic Convention of 1972 may have been the first major national political event in which women were recognized (by others and by themselves) as a serious and significant political force. Such recognition seems to be growing. In 1975, when the National Organization for Women was entitled by the Internal Revenue Service to endorse political candidates without jeopardizing its tax-exempt status, politicians flocked to its leaders with political romance in mind. NOW leaders expect the organization's endorsements to continue to be eagerly sought. So far, it has handed them out sparingly, and only to women candidates—not, its spokeswomen explain, because of sexual bias, but because of the genuine difficulty in finding male politicians who are, in NOW's eyes, sufficiently committed to women's rights.[27]



**Women's Organizations—A Political Force**

Whatever their level of participation in male-dominated parties and political movements, women have always had their own organizations. Many women's organizations actively seek political involvement, while others find themselves inadvertently involved in particular issues. Indeed, the variety of women's organizations is bewildering, covering the entire spectrum of size, purpose, degree of formality, effectiveness, durability, and political persuasion. Among the myriad that are active in the political arena, gross distinctions may be drawn between those whose explicit reason for existence is political action, those whose political involvement stems from an interest in a particular issue or set of issues, and those whose political power comes from the numerical strength and solidarity of their membership.

In the first category are organizations whose major activity is direct political action, such as the League of Women Voters or the National Women's Political Caucus in the United States. Some of them, like the former, simply encourage informed participation in the electoral process through voter registration and education campaigns, while others like the latter work for the nomination and election of particular candidates.

The second category holds the bulk of women's organizations—those whose purpose is not explicitly political but that enter the political arena as interest-group actors on behalf of a particular cause. These organizations may endorse particular candidates, but do not necessarily make a practice of it; they often lobby on behalf of legislation, or sponsor more demonstrative political actions such as rallies, marches, and public pronouncements. They serve an educational function that may greatly affect legislation and public opinion by researching and publicizing controversial issues. The range of subjects with which women's organizations concern themselves is limitless; it is by no means confined to so-called women's issues. Yet issues that lack other advocates naturally receive some emphasis; marriage and divorce laws, reproductive freedom, equal pay, and equal educational opportunity are some examples. An interest group of the second type may be a temporary, ad hoc group formed in response to a particular controversy—like those generated by the debates over the legal status of abortion in France, Italy, and the United States—or it may be an established institution such as the YWCA. The organizations in this category are so diverse that it is almost impossible to generalize about them, except to say that they often make an important contribution to the policy-making process.



The third type of organization wields political power by virtue of its size and, typically, a certain homogeneity in the views of its members. Some religious organizations of women fall into this category, as do the women's organizations of many tribal or ethnic groups in Africa. An historical example of the latter is the *mikiri*, or women's meeting, among the Igbo in Eastern Nigeria, which carried out a series of highly coordinated violent demonstrations against the British administration in 1929-30. The so-called Aba Riots, though misunderstood by the British, did bring about a set of reforms in the native administration. Not much has been written about what has happened to the *mikiri* since then, but another African example demonstrates that traditional women's organizations are alive and well and adapting to the conditions of political competition in the modern state. In Sierra Leone, the women's initiation societies, or *Bundu*, have been important political assets for female politicians who use them to build local power bases and to recruit a ready supply of loyal political workers. Ninety-five percent of the women in the

provinces are initiates, and recognize sisterly bonds to other *Bundu* women, especially those of their own chapter.[28]

28 Economic interests can also bind women together in large and important groups: the market-women's associations in several African countries are regarded as valuable political allies by local politicians. These women's groups customarily vote as a bloc and have the resources to back politicians who espouse their interests. Probably the most important political activities of women's organizations in this third category are publicizing their own positions on issues and making a show of solidarity among their members so impressive that politicians will find it injudicious to oppose their opinions.

An additional important group of women's organizations shares characteristics of all three of the foregoing types. This fourth type consists of large multi-purpose groups that include in their mandates educational functions and social services as well as political work. They are probably the most effective organs of broad social change to be found among women's organizations, being large, well-organized, usually well-funded, and supported by a nationwide membership. Some, like Japan's six-million member *Chifuren*, are conservative, concentrating political activity on consumer issues and social services. Some are staunchly liberal, like the National Organization for Women in the United States, and focus more narrowly on women's issues. Still others, like Kenya's *Maendelo da Wanawake*, have a reputation for militancy, perhaps because women have been so thoroughly excluded from the policy-making process of the countries in which they operate.

Aside from influencing policy, women's organizations have provided the same kind of leadership training for women as party activity has. Free of the domination by men which is taken for granted in so many contexts, women in women's organizations can develop the skills, confidence, and reputation for leadership necessary for them to exercise real influence in politics. Professor Kirkpatrick, in her earlier mentioned study of women politicians, found that more than 80 percent of the women legislators in her sample had been active in two or more voluntary organizations; fully 40 percent of the women in her sample had been active in the League of Women

Voters.[29] As other avenues to political influence that have traditionally excluded women, like business and the professions, become more accessible to them, the training function of women's organizations may come to be less important. For the present, however, the barriers to women are still intact along the paths to power that men have traditionally followed, though they are being breached more and more often. The training function of women's organizations remains, therefore, crucially important to women's advancement in politics.



**Traditional Attitudes—The Highest Hurdle**

The most serious barrier to women in politics undoubtedly continues to be the persistence of the belief, held by both men and women, that politics and public affairs are by nature exclusively male domains. The roots of this tradition go very deep indeed.

It is easy to imagine that the first political acts of primitive human beings involved the organization and execution of defense measures against a common enemy, or perhaps the organization and pursuit of the hunt for game. Women in the bands of hunters and sometime-warriors spent practically their whole adult lives bearing and nurturing children. By default men came to monopolize what then passed for public life. Some have argued that they were naturally better suited to the pursuit of the public good, being of superior size and strength; others have argued that men devoted themselves to such pursuits out of a deep sense of inferiority at being unable to bear children. But whatever the biological imperative, the basic division of labor in the human species, public/male and private/female, seems to have been established very early, and to have persisted with astonishing tenacity long after the biological imperative ceased to justify it for most of human-kind. As a result, seeking and wielding power have been excluded from the very definition of femininity in most societies.

The impact of these time-held but broken-backed beliefs on women's participation in politics is multifarious: both political officials and voters are reluctant to support a woman for public office; women

**"In 1975, 73 percent of the American voting public said they would vote for a qualified woman for president."**

themselves tend to have relatively low aspirations in the political sphere; the traditional division of labor assigns to women the time-consuming daily tasks of household management, which may include
30 a large component of production of food and other necessities, and which leave women little time left over for pursuit of voluntary activities.

Widespread resistance to the idea of women in responsible political positions shows signs, in some places, of crumbling. In a 1975 Gallup Poll in the United States, 73 percent of the American voting public said they would vote for a qualified woman for president. In 1931, less than a third said they would do so. Part of the reason for such changes is surely the growing awareness that sexual discrimination is as much a violation of human rights as racial or religious discrimination. The United Nations' designation of 1975 as International Women's Year helped to establish women's rights internationally as a respectable issue.

A more receptive attitude toward women in politics may also contain elements of reaction against a blighted public image of male-dominated politics. The same Gallup Poll also reported that seven out of ten respondents thought the United States would be governed as well or better than it is now if more women held office because women were expected to be more frugal, less corrupt, and harder-working. Kirkpatrick's findings were consistent with this observation: the women politicians in her study felt that voters were predisposed to regard women candidates as trustworthy, honest, selfless, and compassionate.[30]

Women politicians commonly have found it more fruitful to present the characteristics traditionally ascribed to women as political advantages instead of handicaps, rather than trying to convince the electorate or the establishment that the difference between men and women in politics is small or unimportant. It is not a feminist approach, but it is a pragmatic one—particularly, it seems, in Latin America, where the "super-madre" is a minor feature of the political landscape. Few Latin women politicians challenge conventional sexual stereotypes; instead they reinforce the image of women as compassionate, nurturing mothers. A television documentary's presenta-

tion of a Colombian woman's unsuccessful 1974 Presidential campaign rhetoric provides an illustration of one such effort:

> "Friends and comrades in arms—I come to Buccaramanga as to my own home. My voice is not just that of a politician —it is the voice of a mother, the voice of a daughter, the voice of a wife. No one understands better than I the anguish, the tragedies and the pain suffered today by millions of Colombians. . ."[31]



The woman who ran for president in Colombia, Maria Eugenia Roja de Moreno Diaz, did not win, mostly because of her extreme right-wing stance. But it is difficult to imagine a woman candidate being able to overcome the inability of both male and female voters to reconcile their notions of national leadership with their ideas of what a woman's role can and should be.

**The Fifth Mountain: Ignorance**

Traditional attitudes inhibit women's political activity in ways that are far more tangible than prejudice and reduced aspirations alone. On the most basic level, girls are much less likely to be sent to school than boys; and the trend that begins in primary schools becomes more pronounced at higher levels of education. Literacy is surely one of the most important prerequisites for most kinds of political participation. Lenin wrote at the time of the Russian Revolution: "A person who can neither read nor write is outside politics; he must first learn the ABC's without which there can be no such thing as politics, only rumors, gossip, fairy tales, and prejudices."[32]

Political involvement for women is chained to literacy, and women account for 62 percent of the world's illiterates. In almost any geographical sub-division one examines, women who cannot read and write outnumber men who are so disabled. Table III gives a breakdown by region of illiteracy according to sex; the pattern that emerges holds for most countries, whatever their general level of literacy. In Greece, one of the cradles of literature, there are still a million people who cannot read or write. Eighty percent of them are women. India has nearly five literate men for every two literate women. In Ethiopia, 15 percent of the men can read and write, but only 4.5 percent of

the women can. In Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Malawi, New Hebrides, and Upper Volta, barely one girl in ten ever goes to school. In Yemen only one in a hundred does. Worldwide, there are half again as many women as men who are illiterate.[33]

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**Table III: Adult Illiteracy Rates by Continent**

| | For Men (percent) | For Women (percent) |
|---|---|---|
| Africa | 63 | 83 |
| Arab States | 60 | 85 |
| Asia | 37 | 57 |
| Latin America | 20 | 27 |
| North America | 1 | 2 |
| Europe | 2 | 5 |
| World Total | 28 | 40 |

Source: "Facts About Females and Education," U.S. Committee for UNICEF, 1975.

Because political leadership is virtually everywhere drawn from the ranks of the educated, the disproportionately small number of women at higher levels of education has a direct effect on women's influence on policy-making. Women's participation in all kinds of political activities will remain low until women have access on equal terms with men to the educational, occupational, and professional expertise that qualifies people for leadership. The gap between men's and women's educational attainment is by no means confined to less developed countries—particularly the gaps in advanced or specialized training. For example, the legal profession in the United States is a traditional springboard into politics. In 1960, women received less than 3 percent of the law degrees in the United States. Their share had increased to 7 percent by 1971 and 11 percent in 1974—a positive sign for the future of women in politics as well as in the legal profession. There is evidence that the trend will continue strongly upward; the enrollment of first-year law students in ABA-approved schools was nearly one-quarter female in 1974-75.[34]

**"The political map of the world will be more heavily dotted with countries where women are heads of state."**

Education is certainly one of the factors that can contribute to the transformation of politics and government, especially at their higher levels, from male preserves into institutions where men and women can make themselves heard equally well. Both the modification of traditional restrictive attitudes and the preparedness of women to take on new roles depend on it to a large extent.



**Signposts of Change**

The political status of women seems to be in the process of a major and lasting change. The change has not yet occurred; in most places it is only beginning. It is likely to be manifested as a long, slow swell of inclusion over the next twenty-five years or so—more women in local office, more women as party officials, more high-level female civil servants and executive appointees, and more women in national elective office. Eventually, the political map of the world will be more heavily dotted with countries where women are heads of state.

All but one-half of one percent of the world's women are now legally entitled to equal political participation with men. Those who have worked in other areas of human rights know well that legal recognition is not even half the battle. But formal equality is the foundation of real equality, and its appearance in the political arena is no mean achievement for women. Furthermore, legal equality is being translated into political activity by women in many countries, though it is still in most places a passive sort of activity.

Women have made a start on a long climb. In most countries that have elections, women do exercise their right to vote, though they do not yet often run for office. They do participate in political parties or in mass organizations, though they do not yet have a major voice in determining the policies of those bodies. They have fought in revolutions and formed a political base for national mobilizations in many countries. Yet women have only rarely surfaced among the leaders in politics. They are nearly absent from the positions where policy is hammered out, where decisions are made, where real power resides. If the global trend is indeed toward inclusion of women in power, the manifestations of the trend are not yet clearly in sight. What, then, are the signs of its imminence?

The most important changes in women's status over the past twenty-five years have come about through legislation and litigation. Women and women's organizations have played a major role in changing the laws or the interpretation of laws that define women's legal status. There is a rapidly-growing body of legal decisions that entitles women to equal pay for equal work, equal educational opportunities, equal choice in marriage, equal ability to hold and inherit property, and, of course, equal right to vote and hold public office.

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The laws which define women's positions in their traditional roles, marriage laws and family codes, are being scrutinized around the world. New laws that recognize women as autonomous human beings within and outside of the family have been adopted in a wide range of countries, from Italy to Indonesia. The power of this development is bound to have ramifications in other areas, politics included. The battles in courts and in Congresses have already brought legal gains for women, but, even more important, these struggles have shown women the power of political action. Women as a group have been initiated into the mysteries of power—its purchase and its exercise. The movement for women's rights has thereby acquired the political sophistication and the political musculature that will enable it to take on the difficult tasks of translating legal rights into concrete improvements.

Reinforcing the growing political sophistication of the women's movement is the broad recognition in the international political arena of women's rights. Sexual discrimination is taking its place alongside racial and religious discrimination as a social taboo, one whose eradication is required by progress toward a more civilized society. In an international forum such as the United Nations, equality between the sexes now gets the same kind of pro forma acknowledgement that political self-determination and economic development get. There is even talk of a U.N. "Decade for Women" comparable to the 1960s' Decade for Development.

Designation of 1975 as International Women's Year brought women's rights to the fore in the consciousness of the literate public, with the IWY Conference providing a focal point for the international communications media. Some have called International Women's

Year a media event only, branding the Conference more of a "beggars banquet" than a serious political event, but such dismissals ignore the political implications of the media's concentration on women's rights. Even ambivalent coverage will almost certainly have a profound impact on public awareness of and concern with the issue. The past few years have seen powerful shifts in public attitudes brought about, at least in part, by the modern international communications network. Women's rights will join minority civil rights, opposition to the Vietnam war, the environmental and consumer protection movements, and scrutiny of multinational corporations as social-policy issues that the media have brought to public attention. The public, in turn, has had a significant impact on governmental policy. The international communications network has also spread awareness of women's issues to countries where these issues might not have been raised for generations—but some women in these countries, the minority of women with access to the international media, are now asking the same questions about sexual equality that are being asked by their sisters halfway around the world. Members of governments are being pressed on women's rights from two directions—from without by the international community and from within by constituent women's rights advocates.



The pressure for equality between men and women has not generated sweeping change. But it is a relentless sort of pressure, the same kind that is applied on behalf of other fundamental human-rights issues like religious freedom, racial equality and political self-determination. Though sexual equality is nowhere achieved as a fact, it is now almost universally accepted as a goal. At the very least, its absence is a continuing source of embarrassment to governments before an international audience. All of the governments represented at the International Women's Year Conference, for example, were eager to point to the gains made by women in their respective countries, to the special programs for women, or to legislation to improve women's status. Remaining inequalities require some sort of defensive posture; even the Saudi Arabians now seem to feel called upon to explain the merits of the sexual *apartheid* to which they still cling.

Women in high official positions are a point of pride today for the governments in which they serve, a mark of international respecta-

bility, even an occasion for sanctimony. A government's desire to enhance its international image is intangible, but it does give women more influence on and within governmental processes, and makes it more likely that women will be sponsored as candidates by major parties and considered for high-level appointments. Most important, the growing acceptance of women in politics will mean that more women may realistically aspire to political power, and that more young women will explicitly choose political careers over traditionally female occupations that lead only indirectly, if at all, to political influence. The trend toward higher aspirations in politics will be bolstered by the already highly visible trend in women's education, with more women being educated to higher levels in traditionally male subjects like law, science, and business.



The policies of national governments may aid or obstruct women's progress toward equal participation in politics. Official policy may reaffirm or ignore the goal of equal participation. Governments may establish guidelines for achieving equitable representation of women in public office or sanction discrimination against women in their own employment. Politicians may call for special efforts to educate the female electorate on political issues and encourage women and men to believe in the importance of women's involvement in the political process or they may reinforce the opinion that politics is a man's world. Advocates of women's rights will probably spend many more years combatting benign neglect by governments than they will spend fighting legal discrimination.

Women will continue to be handicapped in their careers, political or otherwise, as long as they are solely or even primarily responsible for the care of small children within the family. But societies may develop some satisfactory ways of communally sharing this responsibility, as seems to be happening in China; family roles may come to be more thoroughly shared between men and women, as they are beginning to be in Sweden. And institutions may evolve that encourage childbearing and nurture within the context of an uninterrupted career by providing routine parental leave and in-workplace nurseries. Whatever the pattern, such developments would facilitate equal participation of women in politics, as in other non-domestic activities.

**" . . . any society that categorically excludes half its members from the processes by which it rules itself will be ruled in a way that is less than fully human."**

Restructured institutions would give women the ability to take advantage of those equal opportunities already achieved.

Women's ability to exercise their equal rights to political participation depends on a host of things other than legal entitlement; family roles is just one of them. When women achieve an equal share of political power, many things besides politics will have changed profoundly. Some further breaking-down of the barriers that constrain the development of individual talents and restrict the range of human resources available to meet society's needs will have taken place. In this respect, women's increasing political participation is both a source and a signal of social change. As a global trend, rising numbers of women in politics will indicate that human beings are making progress toward a more humane world—not because women are necessarily more humane than men, but because any society that categorically excludes half its members from the processes by which it rules itself will be ruled in a way that is less than fully human.

## Appendix A

### Voting Rates by Sex in National Elections: Percent Eligible Voters Who Voted

| Country | Year | Women | Men | Proportion of Women (percent) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| U.S. | 1966 | 53 | 58 | – |
| | 1968 | 66 | 70 | – |
| | 1972 | 62 | 64 | – |
| Sweden | 1921 | 47 | 62 | – |
| | 1970 | 89 | 90 | – |
| Western Europe | mid-sixties | 85 | 87 | – |
| Japan | 1944-46 | 60-70 | 72 | – |
| Philippines | 1960s | 80 | 80 | – |
| India | 1952 | 55 | 67 | 36[1] |
| | 1967 | 55 | 67 | – |
| | 1971 | – | – | 42[1] |
| Mexico | 1953 | – | – | 44[2] |
| | 1973 | – | – | 48[2] |
| Chile | 1971 | – | – | 44[2] |
| Peru | 1968 | – | – | 37[2] |
| Argentina | 1973 | 80 | 80 | – |
| USSR | normal year | 99 | – | – |
| Egypt | 1967 | 24 | – | – |
| | 1971 | – | – | 11[1] |

[1]These percentages apply to the proportion of women among those who actually voted.
[2]Applies to proportion of registered voters.

## Appendix B

### Women in National Legislative Bodies

| Country | Legislative Body | No. of Members | Year | Proportion of Women (percent) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| NORTH & EAST EUROPE | | | | |
| Finland | Eduskunta | 200 | 1907 | 10 |
| | | | 1908 | 13 |
| | | | 1930 | 6 |
| | | | 1966 | 17 |
| | | | 1975 | 22 |
| Sweden | Parliament* | 380 | 1921 | 1 |
| | | | 1949 | 7 |
| | | | 1967 | 14 |
| | | 350 | 1975 | 21 |
| Denmark | Folketing | 179 | 1963 | 8 |
| | | | 1975 | 17 |
| Poland | Parliament | | 1975 | 15 |
| Bulgaria | Parliament | | 1975 | 19 |
| | Council of the People | | 1975 | 37 |
| USSR | Supreme Soviet | | 1974 | 31 |
| | | | 1975 | 35 |
| | Central Committee | 241 | 1975 | 2 |
| | Council of Ministers | 92 | 1975 | 0 |
| | Politburo | 22 | 1975 | 0 |
| WEST EUROPE, NORTH AMERICA & OCEANIA | | | | |
| U.K. | House of Commons | 630 | 1943 | 4 |
| | | | 1951 | 3 |
| | | | 1963 | 4 |
| | | | 1975 | 4 |
| W. Germany | Bundestag | 518 | 1950 | 10 |
| | | | 1963 | 9 |
| | | | 1975 | 7 |
| Greece | Chamber of Deputies | 300 | 1963 | 1 |
| | | | 1975 | 2 |
| U.S. | Congress* | 535 | 1961 | 4 |
| | | | 1971 | 2 |
| | | | 1975 | 3 |
| New Zealand | Parliament | 80 | 1963 | 5 |
| | House of Representatives | 87 | 1975 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ASIA | | | | | |
| Japan | House of Representatives | 410 | 1946 | 10 |
| | | 467 | 1968 | 2 |
| | | | 1970 | 2 |
| Philippines | Senate | 24 | Highest in Any Year | 12 |
| | House of Representatives | 104 | " | 6 |
| India | Parliament* | 756 | 1951 | 3 |
| | | 767 | 1975 | 5 |
| | Lok Sabha | 509 | 1951 | 3 |
| | | | 1957 | 5 |
| | | 523 | 1962 | 6 |
| | | | 1967 | 5 |
| | | | 1971 | 4 |
| Bangladesh | Parliament | 313 | (15 seats reserved for women) | |
| China (PRC) | Central Committee | 74 | 1956 | 5 |
| | | 145 | 1969 | 8 |
| | | 260 | 1975 | 14 |
| | Politburo | 25 | 1973 | 8 |
| | | 22 | 1975 | 5 |
| | Standing Committee of the Politburo | 9 | 1973 | 0 |
| AFRICA & MIDDLE EAST | | | | |
| Israel | Knesseth | 120 | 1948 | 9 |
| | | | 1973 | 7 |
| Egypt | National Assembly | 350 | 1975 | 2 |
| Lebanon | Parliament | 99 | 1973 | 0 |
| Syria | Parliament | 122 | 1973 | 4 |
| Tunisia | Parliament | 90 | 1973 | 4 |
| Liberia | Congress* | 70 | 1974 | 7 |
| Sudan | Parliament | 250 | 1973 | 5 |
| Guinea | National Assembly | – | 1975 | 27 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LATIN AMERICA | | | | | |
| Argentina | Legislature* | 291 | 1952 | 11 | 41 |
| | | | 1972 | 0 | |
| | | | 1975 | 2 | |
| Brazil | Legislature | 430 | 1969 | 2 | |
| | | | 1975 | 1 | |
| Chile | Chamber of Deputies | 135 | 1963 | 4 | |
| | | | 1968 | 9 | |
| | | | 1969 | 7 | |
| Colombia | Congress* | 232 | 1963 | 3 | |
| | | | 1969 | 3 | |
| | | 310 | 1975 | 3 | |
| Costa Rica | National Assembly | 57 | 1963 | 2 | |
| | | | 1975 | 5 | |
| El Salvador | National Assembly | 54 | 1963 | 3 | |
| | | 52 | 1975 | 3 | |
| Guatemala | National Assembly | 66 | 1975 | 2 | |
| Mexico | Parliament | 238 | 1963 | 3 | |
| | | | 1975 | 8 | |
| Nicaragua | Legislature* | 58 | 1963 | 9 | |
| | | 90 | 1975 | 6 | |
| Panama | National Assembly | 505 | 1975 | 0 | |
| Paraguay | Legislature | 90 | 1975 | 7 | |

*Indicates a bicameral legislature

## Notes

1. It is important to realize that during this thirty year period the total number of nations in the world increased as former colonies achieved independence.



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KATHLEEN NEWLAND is a Researcher with Worldwatch Institute. Her most recent research efforts have focused on ecological problems in agriculture and, following attendance at the International Women's Year Conference in Mexico, the changing role of women. She has worked for the Institute for World Order in New York and for the Ford Foundation in India.

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